

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 ACDA-12 /086 W
-----074070 011041Z /11

R 312130Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7255
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 05888

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1
TAGS: PGOV, UR, GW, WB, GE
SUBJECT: ABRASIMOV AND FALIN: DIFFERENT APPROACHES
TO SOVIET POLICY ON BERLIN?

REFS: (A) USBER 619
(B) BONN 4528
(C) 76 BONN 15262
(D) 76 USBER 149 (NOTAL)
(E) 75 USBER 2187
(F) BONN 3067
(G) USBER 474

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE SOME TENTATIVE INDICATIONS
THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE FRG (FALIN) IS
PLAYING AN INCREASING ROLE IN BERLIN POLICY, A CHANGE
FROM THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF SUCH A ROLE FOR THE PAST
YEAR OR TWO. THESE INDICATIONS REFLECT A SOMEWHAT
DIFFERENT APPROACH THAN THAT OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO
THE GDR (ABRASIMOV), WHO IS OFFICIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR
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BERLIN. THE LIMITED EVIDENCE WE HAVE PERMITS US ONLY
TO PONDER WHETHER THE DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH REFLECT
A MORE FUNDAMENTAL DIVISION IN SOVIET POLICY, LACK OF
COMPLETE COORDINATION OR MERELY THE ATTITUDES OF
AMBASSADORS TO OPPOSING GOVERNMENTS. WE HAVE NO ANSWER
TO SUGGEST AND WOULD APPRECIATE THE VIEWS OF INTERESTED
ADDRESSEES. END SUMMARY

1. REGARDING SOVIET POLICY TOWARD BERLIN, WE HAVE GENERALLY ADOPTED THE WORKING ASSUMPTION THAT THERE IS A UNIFORM POLICY AND THAT THE VIEWS OF THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR (ABRASIMOV) ARE, IF NOT DETERMINING, THEN AT LEAST PREEMINENT (REF B). THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE FRG (FALIN) APPEARS TO HAVE HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH THIS POLICY FOR THE PAST YEAR OR TWO.

2. IN THE RECENT PAST, HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT FALIN MAY BE PLAYING, OR IS ATTEMPTING TO PLAY, AN INCREASING ROLE. THE INDICATIONS, WHICH ARE SET OUT BELOW, ARE AT BEST OF LIMITED SCOPE AND PERMIT US ONLY TO PONDER WHETHER THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FALIN'S APPROACH AND THAT OF ABRASIMOV REFLECT A MORE FUNDAMENTAL DIVISION IN SOVIET POLICY, A LACK OF COMPLETE COORDINATION OR MERELY THE ATTITUDES OF AMBASSADORS TO OPPOSING GOVERNMENTS. IT MAY, OF COURSE, REFLECT VERY GOOD SOVIET COORDINATION (PARAGRAPH 4 OF REF A).

3. INDICATIONS OF FALIN/ABRASIMOV DIFFERENCES ARE NOT NEW (REFS C, D AND E) BUT HAVE NOT BEEN NOTICED FOR SOME TIME. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE REPORT THAT ZAGLADIN TOLD FRG JUSTICE MINISTER VOGEL THAT SOVIET POLICY IS NOT 100 PERCENT THOUGHT THROUGH IN ALL OF ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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RAMIFICATIONS MIGHT BE NOTED (SEPTTEL). WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THE VIEWS OF INTERESTED ADDRESSEES ON THIS SUBJECT.

4. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE BASES FOR THE FOREGOING SPECULATION:

(A) FALIN RECENTLY TOLD FRG STATE SECRETARY SPANGENBERG THAT FALIN IS NOW SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS BERLIN AND INNER-GERMAN MATTERS WITH THE FRG. SPANGENBERG OBSERVED THAT THIS APPEARED LIKE A RADICAL DEPARTURE IN SOVIET ATTITUDES (REF F).

(B) PRIOR TO BERLIN MAYOR STOBBE'S MEETING WITH ABRASIMOV (REF G), SPD GENERAL MANAGER EGON BAHR ARRANGED A MEETING IN BONN BETWEEN STOBBE AND FALIN ON FEBRUARY 16 WHEN STOBBE WAS IN BONN FOR OTHER PURPOSES. FALIN REPORTEDLY TOLD STOBBE THAT THE SOVIETS WERE INTERESTED IN INVITING STOBBE TO VISIT MOSCOW.

THIS MAY HAVE CAUSED SOME EMBARRASSMENT TO FALIN SINCE, ACCORDING TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE, HE APPARENTLY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 05888

DID NOT REPORT THE MEETING TO MOSCOW BUT THE FACT IT
TOOK PLACE WAS LEAKED TO THE PRESS. THE FOREIGN OFFICE
HAS TOLD US QUITE CONFIDENTIALLY THAT THE FRG AMBASSADOR
IN MOSCOW SAW THE PRESS REPORT AND, IN A CONVERSATION
WITH BONDARENKO AND SCHIKIN OF THE SOVIET MFA THIRD
EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT, ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE INVITATION
TO VISIT MOSCOW WHICH FALIN MENTIONED TO STOBBE.
SCHIKIN SAID THAT ABRASIMOV HAD MENTIONED THE INVITATION
AND, WHEN THE FRG AMBASSADOR SAID THAT PERHAPS BOTH
FALIN AND ABRASIMOV HAD MENTIONED IT, BONDARENKO REPLIED
THAT THIS MUST HAVE BEEN THE CASE. THE FOREIGN OFFICE
ASSURES US ABRASIMOV DID NOT MENTION AN INVITATION.

(C) WHEN STOBBE MET WITH ABRASIMOV, ABRASIMOV
REFERRED TO THE REPORTS OF FALIN'S MEETING WITH STOBBE
AND (PRESUMABLY AT LEAST PART IN JEST) ASKED STOBBE
WHETHER HE HAD INTENTIONALLY MET WITH FALIN BEFORE HE
HAD MET ABRASIMOV.
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(D) WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED IN THE BONN GROUP THAT FALIN VISITED FRANK OF THE OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL PRESIDENT ON JANUARY 26 TO REPORT THAT BREZHNEV REGRETTED HE COULD NOT COME TO THE FRG ON SCHEDULE. AS HE LEFT, FALIN MENTIONED RUDOLF HESS AND, IMPLICITLY REFERRING TO THE SOVIET REPLY LAST FALL TO PRESIDENT SCHEEL'S LETTER TO THE FOUR POWERS ON HESS, SAID THAT HE HAD NOT FORGOTTEN ABOUT HESS BUT WAS CONTINUING TO LOOK FOR A SOLUTION. THIS IS IN CONTRAST TO THE USUAL SOVIET ATTITUDE OF REJECTING ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR HESS' RELEASE.

(E) AT THE RECENT QUADRIPARTITE LUNCHEON (REF B), VAN WELL SAID THAT FALIN INTERVENED IN FAVOR OF THE FRG REGARDING THE BAVARIAN EXHIBITION IN MOSCOW AND SOVIET REFUSAL TO PERMIT THE USE OF FRG PAMPHLETS WHICH INCLUDED STATISTICS ON BERLIN IN SUCH A WAY, THE SOVIETS CLAIMED, AS TO PORTRAY BERLIN AS PART OF THE FRG.

IN RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, WE ARE NOW INFORMED BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE THAT, CONTRARY TO VAN WELL'S EXPLANATION, (REF B), FALIN DID NOT INTERVENE IN FAVOR OF THE FRG. THE FRG FOREIGN OFFICE TOOK UP THE MATTER WITH THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE, AS WAS ALSO DONE WITH THE MFA. THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BONN REVIEWED THE PAMPHLETS "WITH A FINE TOOTHED COMB" AND PROCEEDED TO FIND EVEN MORE OBJECTIONABLE ITEMS THAN THE MFA HAD. THE FONOFF SPECULATES THAT FALIN USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE MFA THAT HE IS NOT BEING SOFT ON THE FRG BY VIRTUE OF THE FACT HE SITS IN BONN AND THAT THIS MAY REFLECT A CERTAIN RIVALRY BETWEEN FALIN AND ABRASIMOV. IN ANY CASE, THE PAMPHLETS WERE EVENTUALLY APPROVED, BUT FOR LIMITED DISTRIBUTION TO SELECT

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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